

VZCZCXRO6046

RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBW RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA
RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHYE #0378 1270700
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 060700Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7496
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS YEREVAN 000378

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: GALA TV ADVOCATE RECOGNIZED WITH MEDIA FREEDOM AWARD WHILE
COURT CASE CONTINUES

REF: A) Yerevan 344, B) Yerevan 261, C) Yerevan 86

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

¶1. (U) On May 3, four prominent Armenian media organizations celebrated international Press Freedom Day by holding their third annual award ceremony recognizing the efforts of Armenian journalists to defend media freedoms. This year, the Yerevan Press Club, the Union of Journalists, Internews and the Committee on Protection of Freedom of Expression selected Levon Barseghian of the Gyumri-based Asparez Press Club as recipient of the "Time for Media Freedom" award.

¶2. (U) Barseghian was presented the award for his active and consistent activities aimed at protecting media freedom. His successful involvement in the cause of embattled GALA TV (reftels) over the past few months was noted in particular. The previous two recipients of the award were Aram Abrahamian, the editor-in-chief of the opposition daily Aravot (Morning) and the opposition publicist Tigran Paskevichian.

¶3. (SBU) Barseghian told Emboff May 5 that the award came as a surprise, modestly stating that his actions were second nature and that he could not have responded otherwise (in reference to the GALA TV affair). Barseghian was less enthusiastic about the award than one would expect, however, given the legal travails he faces related to his pro-opposition political activities. He told Emboff that later in the day on May 5 he was scheduled to appear in court to pursue his counter-claim against police. Ref A detailed how Gyumri police had accused him of resisting the orders of officers on March 2 when present at a small public gathering. The police asked the court to penalize Barseghian with an administrative fine of 50,000 Armenian drams (approx 160 dollars). Barseghyan denounced as untrue the police accusation, and accused them of violence against himself, as well as illegally detaining him for six hours that day.

PENNINGTON